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TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 7608  
INFO RUEHZM/GULF COOPERATION COUNCIL COLLECTIVE  
RUEHLO/AMEMBASSY LONDON 2618  
RUEHFR/AMEMBASSY PARIS 0557

C O N F I D E N T I A L RIYADH 003889

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DHAHRAN SENDS  
PARIS FOR ZEYA, LONDON FOR TSOU

E.O. 12958: DECL: 05/17/2016  
TAGS: [PGOV](#) [SA](#)  
SUBJECT: DETAINED SHI'A CLERIC RELEASED; A SECOND  
QUESTIONED AND RELEASED

REF: A. RIYADH 3720  
[1](#)B. RIYADH 3312

Classified by Consul General John Kincannon for reasons 1.4  
(b) and (d).

[1](#)1. (C) The SAG released detained Shi'a cleric Nimr Al-Nimr in the evening of May 15, according to his brother Mohammed Al-Nimr. Al-Nimr had been in SAG custody since May 11 (ref A). A small delegation of family and others had met with the Eastern Province's vice governor, Prince Jiluwi, earlier in the day, Mohammed said, and Prince Jiluwi said he would intervene to seek Al-Nimr's release.

[1](#)2. (C) Meanwhile, post learned from Ahmed Al-Nimr, brother of Shi'a cleric Hassan Al-Nimr, that the Mubahith detained Hassan for questioning during part of the day of May 13 or [1](#)14. (Note: Ahmed did not say the exact date, but from the conversation we believe it was a day or two before Nimr Al-Nimr's release. End note.) According to Ahmed, the Mubahith questioned Hassan about a "cultural symposium" in Qatif. (Note: Cultural symposium is likely a euphemism for some sort of political activity. End note.) Ahmed said that Hassan had not been involved in the symposium under discussion and told that to the Mubahith. According to Ahmed, the Mubahith released Hassan later in the day after he signed some sort of statement and after someone else provided a guarantee Hassan would return for further questioning, if asked. Ahmed further speculated that Nimr Al-Nimr's detention had something to do with his activity in Bahrain, contradicting Mohammed Al-Nimr's speculation (ref A). Ahmed said that Nimr Al-Nimr and Hassan Al-Nimr are not closely related.

[1](#)3. (C) Comment: Contacts have described Nimr Al-Nimr as a hard-line "maverick." Hassan Al-Nimr, who participated in the most recent National Dialogue and was widely quoted as questioning why Saudis should talk about talking with others when they could not talk properly with each other, is perhaps a smoother version of Nimr Al-Nimr: we have heard both of their names in connection with the group Saudi Hezbollah. The detention of Nimr Al-Nimr and the questioning of Hassan Al-Nimr suggests the SAG thinks something specific is afoot and/or wants to send a veiled warning to the Shi'a factions least inclined to work within the Saudi system (see ref B). End comment.

(APPROVED: KINCANNON)  
GFOELLER